

THE NEW MORALITY.

An Inquiry into the Ethics of Anti-Vivisection.

.. BY ..

L. LIND-AF-HAGEBY.

THE ANIMAL DEFENCE AND ANTI-VIVISECTION SOCIETY.

170, Piccadilly, London, W.

1911.

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formerly at 170, PICCADILLY.

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Moral Enthusiasts.

Moral enthusiasts are the salt of the earth. Having *felt* the right or wrong of a principle or a practice, they have little need of elaborate thinking in order to establish the righteousness of their opinions. Their perception of duty, of justice towards fellow-creatures, of the necessity for active kindness, is generally so far in advance of the views of the majority of their own generation that they are deemed fools and faddists by those to whom it is natural to offer resistance to the claims of progressive morals.

Such enthusiasts initiated all great reforms. They fought for their ideas against indifference, ridicule, and opposition until, led by their force and pierced by their light, mankind ripened into a general acceptance of their message. And laws and creeds have changed, and social systems and political tenets have thrown off some of their selfishness because of this persistent call for justice.

The heart of all life speaks through them, and their words are ever hot with the suffering of sympathy.

The anti-vivisection movement was born of such moral enthusiasm. From the Royal Commission of 1875 to the Royal Commission of 1906 it has chiefly drawn its strength from such sources. And it was well nurtured by some of the greatest minds of the past century. The poets, the artists, the thinkers gave expression to their moral revolt against the callousness of the scientific torture of animals. The moral indignation of those who initiated the crusade spread with rapidity, and has set up an organised opposition which has placed the controversy among the "burning questions" of modern times.

And yet—and this is a tribute to the powers that are of the heart—the expansion of the anti-vivisection movement through every section of the community is largely due to its appeal to the emotions. The horror of "cutting into that which is alive," the pitiful and helpless state of the mangled and diseased victims, the deliberate and calm indifference to the infliction of pain of the vivisector, and the manifold and perfect apparatus and instruments of subjection and violation which fill his laboratory—these and many other mental pictures associated with the work of the experimental physiologist are apt to bring about an emotional vortex which leaves little room for a calm flow of thought. Words of condemnation have been hurled at the vivisector, souls have been ablaze with hatred of him, hostility has relegated him to a fiend, his science to a mockery of all that is good. Even among the foremost thinkers who have given their allegiance to anti-vivisection there has been comparatively

little effort to penetrate into the depths of the defence of vivisection, or to seek a rational explanation of its existence and its fallacies. The æsthete has turned away with loathing, and the ethicist has often thought it unnecessary and degrading to enter upon any close investigation of what to him seemed to be nothing but "the base utilitarian point of view."

The Controversy has Shifted Ground.

Meanwhile the controversy has slowly but surely shifted ground. The vivisector, unable to resist the moral persecution, has become "humane." Ruthlessly dragged out from the beloved privacy of his laboratory, and exposed to public criticism and scorn, he has been forced to change his tactics of defence. He no longer gives us the open and frank admissions which characterised a Magendie, a Cyon, and many others. "It is easily understood," wrote Claude Bernard in 1879, "that the cries of animals undergoing vivisections in private houses upset the neighbours," . . . and "you will see that the value of the laboratory does not least lie in the fact that it shelters us from those who are too sensitive."* In 1874 Mr. David Ferrier, delivering the introductory lecture at King's College, said: "It is not my intention standing here to make any *apologia vivisectionis*, or to reply to the numerous attacks recently made on its advocates and prosecutors, . . . but, on the other hand, we who are regarded as offenders have strong reasons to feel aggrieved at the practice of those who, professing to have such delicate sensibilities, gratify their prurient

* "Leçons de Physiologie Opératoire," 1879.

propensities by prying into what was never intended for their eyes or ears.”* . . . Such utterances should be contrasted with the latest forms of the *apologia vivisectionis*, as for instance that given in Professor Halliburton's Handbook of Physiology (seventh edition, 1905), where we learn that: “Many experiments involve the use of living animals, but the discovery of anæsthetics, which render such experiments painless, has got rid of any objection to experiments on the score of pain.”

The modern vivisector does not tell us in that unabashed way that his work is not meant for our “eyes or ears.” He is well aware of the existence of societies for the protection of animals, and of the infectious nature of certain “rabid” sentiments which are especially noxious to him. He therefore paints “Anæsthetics” in large letters on the walls of his laboratory, and in moments of extreme amiability he may even invite the public to pay him a visit and see a model vivisection. The anti-vivisectionist who does not fully grasp the meaning of this changed attitude, and who does not alter his tactics of attack to suit the new situation, is bound to succeed badly, and to prolong unnecessarily a struggle which can have but one ultimate issue.

Blind to the signs of the times, some anti-vivisectionists still use the methods which were effective and necessary thirty years ago, but which at the present time are of little value. They advise everybody not to venture out upon the dangerous paths of scientific thought, but “to stick to the moral side,” and they reiterate with the deepest conviction that their sole business is the objection to torture.

* “Rational Medicine,” by David Ferrier, M.D., 1874.

We can well imagine the following dialogue between an up-to-date vivisector and an anti-vivisectionist of the type referred to:—

Anti-vivisectionist (with vehemence): I object to torture, Sir.

Vivisector (suavely): But there is no torture, my dear Sir.

Anti-vivisectionist: You practise diabolical cruelty on poor, dumb, defenceless animals.

Vivisector: All animals on which I experiment are anæsthetised, and there can, therefore, be no question of cruelty. I presume that you eat meat, and, therefore, can have no objection to the painless taking of animal life?

Anti-vivisectionist: Of course I eat meat, but killing an animal is not torturing it.

Vivisector: I am not quite sure that the slaughter-house is free from all cruelty, and before you condemn my painless experiments I advise you to go and carefully study all details connected with the preparation of beef for your table.

Anti-vivisectionist: I have no doubt that slaughter-house reform is necessary, but I am still more convinced of the necessity of prohibiting the prolonged torture which you practise in the degraded name of science.

Vivisector: I must point out to you again that there can be no torture when the animals are anæsthetised, *i.e.*, for your purposes they are practically dead, yes, dead as far as sensation and suffering of any kind go. Sometimes, very seldom, they are allowed to regain consciousness after an

operation, and are kept alive for purposes of observation, but the wounds are always aseptic, the healing painless, and the animals seem very happy.

Anti-Vivisectionist: But sometimes you inoculate them with terrible diseases, and leave them to die slowly in agony.

Vivisector: Allow me to explain to you that I always see that my animals are killed if there should be any signs of suffering, and that even if I did not, that suffering would be insignificant compared with that inflicted on animals for the sake of pleasure and convenience and in sport.

Anti-Vivisectionist (irritated): Sport and vivisection cannot be compared; one is killing, the other is torture.

It is evident that if any satisfactory result is to come out of such a discussion the opponents must not stand on two sides of a gulf which hopelessly divides their attempts to come to an understanding. In order to prove the existence of torture, or the impossibility of painless vivisection, the anti-vivisectionist must arm himself with some science, just as the vivisector has learnt to talk amateurish humanitarian morality. It cannot, of course, be denied that every anti-vivisectionist, who strives for competency as an aid to the achievement of his object, does avail himself, to some extent, of scientific thought and experience—in spite of his protestations to the contrary. His attempts to show cruelty would otherwise be altogether futile, for in the vivisectional jugglery with the words “anæsthetic,” “aseptic,” and “reflex action” he would stand utterly helpless were he not acquainted with the rudiments of science, as well as with the dictates of

common sense. Some knowledge of the process of anæsthesia, of the pain following upon operations, of the nature of diseases, of the sensibility and mental life of animals is essential to every anti-vivisectionist.

Anti-Scientific Bias.

"I know nothing of the scientific side of this question and care less" is a lamentable statement which, sometimes, is made on anti-vivisection platforms. Such samples of intellectual laziness and wilful ignorance of the real meaning of the anti-vivisection movement might bring some justification to the words of Huxley, who, in 1878, wrote of "the anti-vivisection folk, for the most of whom I have a hearty contempt."* Feeling without knowledge is ever apt to lead us astray, and every good cause must suffer if its advocates prefer to remain uninstructed in the very subjects which are within the immediate circle of their desire for reform. The vivisection question has with every year grown more complicated, and the time is past when either side could dismiss it with a few words of passionate disapproval on the one hand and some phrases of arrogant scientific dogmatism on the other. It has become a life study, entangled as it is with the many problems of the ethics of our general treatment of animals, with the claims of physiology, medicine, and public health. The attempts to give a false simplicity to the controversy can only serve to estrange the most intellectual and widely cultured from the anti-vivisection movement. The word "science" has come to be a bugbear

* "Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley," by his son, Leonard Huxley. Vol. II., p. 236. 1903.

to some anti-vivisectionists, who forget that it is always "a little knowledge" that is dangerous, and that the diffusion of a wider knowledge and the growth of true science can only hasten the abolition of vivisection.

If the roots of the anti-vivisection movement are to be found in the realms of the heart—from whence springs all need of a fuller manifestation of altruism—and its flower and fruit in the harmonising of knowledge and love, through the forthbringing of a humanity, intellectually sane and morally whole, then the motives and aims of anti-vivisection should be fully studied, fully discussed and fully developed.

The Science of Anti-Vivisection.

The anti-scientific bias of some opponents of animal experimentation is founded on a confusion of the "base utilitarian argument" with the width of view and logical system of reasons, which can only be attained by a thorough and scientific study of the principles—moral and intellectual—which guide the development of anti-vivisection. The moral, social, and mental sciences are worthy of respectful attention from the earnest anti-vivisectionist; ethical philosophy and the history of the progress of morals should be of actual interest to him. He should, above all, as a friend of the animal world, be ready to listen to the interpretation of nature, as given by the zoologist and the animal psychologist. Whatever his faith as to the ultimate and greater issues of life and death, the evolution idea, which has revolutionised modern science and penetrated into all its departments, can but be his friend in demonstrating the physical and

mental kinship of all that breathes upon this planet. Why should he shut his ears to the tales of progress of physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy, or to the lessons of radio-activity and the latest views of matter? Even the limit, the impotence of physical science is replete with signs to him. Such studies will reveal to him the coarseness of the vivisectional methods, and the constant advance of intellectual criticism of scientific procedure will show him that the day must come when science itself will, without protest, discard a method of biological research which destroys the very conditions which it professes to interpret.

His aim is to make the quest of natural knowledge conform to the growth of moral consciousness, and he can only do this by being alike a student of morals and of science. It is therefore not out of place to speak of the *science* of anti-vivisection, meaning thereby the pursuit of knowledge which will rationalise anti-vivisection.

The Essential Unity of the Morals and the Science of Anti-Vivisection.

The intellectual criticism of vivisection—the demonstration of its scientific perversity and practical failures—need not imply any disregard of the priority of the moral objection to the practice. “That which is morally wrong cannot be scientifically right” is an ethical aphorism often repeated by anti-vivisectionists, though not always with adequate comprehension of the profound beauty of this truth in a verbal nutshell. For if a more philosophic recognition of its full

purport prevailed, there would be less misunderstanding of the aims of scientific anti-vivisection. The equilibration of "sentiment" and "reason" is accomplished through the realisation of the final unity of all our search for truth and all our aspiration to goodness.

Four Stages.

It is possible to distinguish between four stages in the development of every humane movement. First, its rise in the mind of some ardent reformer, strong in intuitive perception of the advance of morality, then its spread among the masses, chiefly as the result of an emotional reaction against the horrors of the particular form of cruelty or injustice which is being impugned, then a general thinking over the reasons for and against the continuance of the practice which intellectualises the contest, and prepares compromises. Finally a common ethical maturity is attained which needs no further arguments, and which allows, as a matter of course, legislative prevention, and the abolition of practices formerly considered necessary and justifiable.

These stages cannot, perhaps, be recognised in any absolute chronological order; they may all be present simultaneously in different classes of the public mind, and the individual adherents of the same "cause" may show great dissimilarity, but they are the general characteristics of the mental sequence in the growth of such movements. The general tendencies of anti-vivisection at the present moment show that it is passing out of the third and into the fourth stage.

restraint of experiments or the preferential exemption of certain species, more than the belief in the saving powers of anæsthetics, much more than can at present be discerned in the whole crusade for the abolition of vivisection. It becomes a stepping-stone to the new morality—a morality which consciously or unconsciously is coveted in all efforts to help the down-trodden and suffering, whether these are human or animal.

Anti-vivisection is a great humanitarian educator. It brings the meanness, the hardness, the barbarity with which we treat the animals in our power to a sharp point which hurts the sensitive, arouses the sleeping, incommodes the selfish. In its passage through humanity it is apt, at a certain stage, to be nourished by insufficiently balanced emotions, but on its upward path it tends to instruct and to widen. Pity will fade with the growth of a new and all-embracing sense of justice between man and man, and man and beast, which will herald a new age of altruism, the product of our suffering, our dreams of beauty, and our most spiritual desires.



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